

# I Want to Live for Two Weeks Underwater in *Aquarius* Because...



## A Writing Contest for NOAA and UNCW's *Aquarius*—America's Inner Space Station

Located 20 meters beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean, next to deep coral reefs in the Florida Keys, lies *Aquarius*—the world's only undersea laboratory. Scientists use *Aquarius* to study our oceans, as astronauts use the International Space Station to study our planet and outer space. Unlike SCUBA divers who typically return to the surface in less than an hour, *Aquarius* scientists, called aquanauts, explore and study coral reefs and their inhabitants for 10-day missions (and sometimes longer), returning to the surface after their project is complete. *Aquarius* is owned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and operated by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW).

How do the aquanauts live underwater for so long? Where do they sleep? How do they get air? Who gets to be an aquanaut? What do they study? How deep can aquanauts dive from *Aquarius*? How does *Aquarius* operate? Find these answers and additional background information about *Aquarius* at its website: [www.uncw.edu/nurc/aquarius](http://www.uncw.edu/nurc/aquarius).

*Aquarius* aquanauts want to hear in 1,000 words or less about why YOU want to live underwater in *Aquarius* for two weeks. Your essay must begin with, "I want to live for two weeks underwater in *Aquarius* because..." and should address the following:

1. *Aquarius* is currently located in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary where scientists study economically-important and spectacular coral reefs. But *Aquarius* can operate at other sites too, from kelp forests off California to the rocky coasts off New England. You may write about living in *Aquarius* for two-weeks underwater at any ocean or freshwater location you select, but you must

justify why you think it's important to operate *Aquarius* at whatever site you choose.

2. As part of your justification for *Aquarius* site selection, you will need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of marine biology and environmental issues that apply to the relevant ecosystem and location.

3. You need to make sure that whatever site you choose meets the operational requirements and constraints of *Aquarius*. Your essay should demonstrate that you understand the advantages and risks of saturation diving. Also, identify anything about the site that makes *Aquarius* operations and saturation diving especially difficult or easy compared to its current location in the Florida Keys. Continued operation in the Florida Keys is allowable.

Judging will be based on demonstrated knowledge related to the above three categories and creativity.

One GRAND PRIZE will be awarded that includes an all expense paid trip\* to Key Largo for a personal tour inside *Aquarius* for the winning student, his/her sponsoring teacher, and parent(s). A SCUBA certification course will be provided in Key Largo to the winning family and teacher.\*\* Upon successful completion of the course, the GRAND PRIZE winner, teacher, and parents will VISIT *AQUARIUS—UNDERWATER*!

Note: The GRAND PRIZE is a conventional SCUBA dive and not a saturation dive. You will not actually get to live inside *Aquarius* for two weeks (unless someday you become an *Aquarius* scientist!). Your visit to *Aquarius* includes a guided tour that will last approximately 60 minutes.

[www.uncw.edu/nurc/aquarius](http://www.uncw.edu/nurc/aquarius)  
UNCW is an EEO/AA employer.

Ten additional prizes will be awarded that include coral reef identification books.

### Contest Rules:

This contest is open to students in grades 8-12. An application form is available on the *Aquarius* website ([www.uncw.edu/aquarius](http://www.uncw.edu/aquarius)), along with more detailed contest rules. All submissions must be typed and the first paragraph must begin, "I want to live underwater for two weeks in *Aquarius* because..." and cannot exceed 1,000 words. Submissions must include: Name, Address, Phone, Email, Birthday (minimum age is 13 by June 1, 2004), Name of School, Grade, Parent Signature, and Sponsoring Teacher Signature.

### Mail entries to:

National Undersea Research Center  
University of North Carolina at Wilmington  
C/O I Want to Live on the Ocean Floor...  
515 Caribbean Drive  
Key Largo, Florida 33037

Entries must be received by April 9th, 2004. Faxes and emails will not be accepted.

Prizes will be announced May 17, 2004, via posting on the *Aquarius* website. Entries become the property of UNCW.

\*Limited to round trip coach airfare from U.S. location to Miami; transportation from Miami to Key Largo; hotel; and SCUBA certification class and equipment rentals (if not previously certified). Food or any other incidentals are not included. Trip to Key Largo must be claimed between June 1 and September 30, 2004.

\*\* Winning student, parents, and teacher must provide a letter from a physician that they are medically fit to SCUBA dive. Visit to *Aquarius* requires SCUBA certification, or successful completion of SCUBA certification as part of the Grand Prize.